

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Child Nutrition Program Specialist
Nutrition Consortium of NYS
(518) 436-8757 x21

SUMMER MEALS PROVIDE GOOD NUTRITION AND BOOST TO ECONOMY, TOO MANY CHILDREN STILL MISSING OUT

Anti-hunger organization calls on national, state, and local entities to boost the number of children eating summer meals, which provide good nutrition, help families stretch food budgets, and bring federal dollars into NYS

Albany, NY – 7/20/2010 – Only 1 in 3 low-income children eating free lunch at school are also eating free summer lunch when school is out, according to the Nutrition Consortium of NYS. This means that across NYS, thousands of low-income children benefitting from free or reduced-price school meals during the school year are experiencing a nutritional gap over the summer.

According to a report released by the Nutrition Consortium of NYS, the Summer Food Service Program benefits children and communities across NYS by reducing child hunger, helping families stretch their food budgets, and supporting summer youth programs feed children. Since each meal is mostly funded by the federal government, summer meals also benefit NYS' economy. If NYS increased its summer food participation by 10%, nearly \$10.4 million additional federal dollars would bolster NYS' economy.

Despite the benefits and existence of funds to prepare and serve free meals to children during the summer, six upstate counties had one or zero free meal sites for children. "No child should go hungry and NYS can do a better job of ensuring all children have access to nutritious meals throughout the year," said Linda Bopp, Executive Director of the Nutrition Consortium of NYS. "We also urge our Congressional delegation to support more efforts to increase access to, and participation in, the Summer Food Service Program through the pending Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation."

Congress is currently working on reauthorizing all of the federal child nutrition programs, including the Summer Food Service Program. Key leaders such as Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, serving on the Senate Agriculture Committee, and House Education and Labor Committee members Tim Bishop (D-1), Yvette Clarke (D-11), Carolyn McCarthy (D-4), and Paul Tonko (D-21) have proposed legislation with significant increases in funding and provisions to strengthen the child nutrition programs.

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS and other anti-hunger advocates across the country have called on Congress to invest new dollars into expanding the reach of the Summer Food Service Program. "Increased funding for child nutrition programs would ensure that more low-income children have access to summer meals that stave off hunger, help reduce obesity, and draw children into

educational and enrichment programs that keep them learning throughout the summer,” said Jim Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center, a national anti-hunger non-profit. “The Summer Nutrition Programs have an important role, but they are clearly in trouble and must be improved.”

The federally and state-funded Summer Food Service Program allows qualified non-profits, faith-based organizations, youth camps, and municipalities to serve free meals to low-income children throughout the summer months. At meal sites, children and teenagers age 18 and younger can eat free meals at participating locations such as schools, parks, community centers, and non-profits. To locate the nearest summer meal site, call: 1-800-522-5006.

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS is a statewide non-profit dedicated to alleviating hunger throughout NYS. Their recent report, *“Bridging the Summer Nutrition Gap: The Summer Food Service Program in NYS, 2009”* provides information about the SFSP and participation data for all counties in NYS. A full copy of the report and executive summary are available online at: www.nutritionconsortium.org.

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